GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:3530
ANSWERED ON:23.12.2008
USE OF BIOTECHNOLOGY FOR HIGHER CROP YIELD
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Will the Minister of SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) the potential and use of biotechnology to achieve higher crop yield;

(b) the measures being taken by the Government to ensure acceptance of biotech crops by farmers and consumers to achieve adequate availability of food to the people; and

(c) the response of the Government thereto?

Answer

MINISTER OF SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY AND MINISTER OF EARTH SCIENCES(KAPIL SIBAL)

(a) Biotechnological interventions has enormous potential to supplement conventional methods of agricultural sciences to enhance crop productivity in sustainable manner. The introduction of GM crops contribute to:
(i) improving crop productivity by reducing losses due to various abiotic, biotic stresses and post harvest spoilage;
(ii) developing crops for herbicide tolerance, delayed ripening and heterosis breeding for higher yield. Apart from these, biotechnology has a great potential in enhancing nutritive value of these crops.

(b) and (c) Bt cotton is the only transgenic crop approved for commercial cultivation in India. However, subsequent to the release of Bt cotton in 2002, the Ministry of Environment and Forests jointly with Deptt of Biotechnology, Ministry of Science & Technology have undertaken several training and capacity building workshops to enhance awareness on biosafety issues among various stakeholders including farmers and consumers to enhance the acceptance of GMOs. The Bt cotton hybrids have been preferred by farmers over the indigenous varieties because of increase in productivity and reduction in use of pesticides. No food crop has so far been approved by Genetic Engineering Approval Committee (GEAC), Ministry of Environment & Forests, Govt. of India for commercial cultivation by the farmers. As per the prescribed biosafety guidelines, all genetically modified food crops are required to undergo extensive biosafety assessment which includes environmental safety assessment as well as food and feed safety before they are approved for environmental release and human consumption.